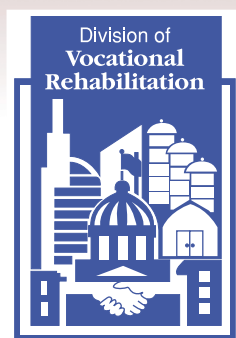





# EMPLOYER RECRUITMENT HANDBOOK

Information,  
Resources  
and Tips  
on Hiring People  
with Disabilities



State of Washington

## WELCOME

Recruiting qualified workers is one of the most challenging tasks facing employers today. For over 75 years, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) has been an employment resource to the business community. In Washington State, Vocational Rehabilitation Programs return \$14.00 for each dollar invested.

*This handbook is intended to help employers deal successfully with the various ways disability may impact their organization, whether accommodating a current employee with a disability or hiring new employees.*

Parts of this handbook reprinted with permission from the Seattle Office for Civil Rights, The President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, and The University of Washington - DO-IT.

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## YOUR CONTACTS

For additional information about any of the information in this handbook, contact the Business Relations Consultant (BRC) in your area. Our BRC's are available to you at no cost, and specialize in providing technical assistance, staff training and professional business consultation.

In Okanogan, Ferry, Stevens, Pend Oreille, Chelan, Douglas, Grant, Lincoln, Spokane, Adams, and Whitman counties call: 1-800-548-0941 (V) 1-888-468-9763(TTY)

In Kittitas, Yakima, Benton, Franklin, Walla Walla, Columbia, Garfield, and Asotin counties call: 1-800-548-8755 (V/TTY)

In Snohomish, Skagit, Whatcom, San Juan, and Island counties call: 1-800-745-5960 (V/TTY)

In King County call: 1-800-622-1375 (V/TTY)

In Pierce and Kitsap counties call: 1-800-548-1406 (V/TTY)

In Clallam, Jefferson, Mason, Grays Harbor, Thurston, Lewis, Pacific, Wahkiakum, Cowlitz, Clark, Skamania, Klickitat counties call: 1-800-548-0946 (V/TTY) For more information visit our website at: [www.wa.gov/dshs/dvr](http://www.wa.gov/dshs/dvr)

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## INTRODUCTION

The latest figures from the U.S. Census Bureau show that there are now 54 million Americans with disabilities. A 2000 National Organization of Disability/Harris survey reported that the vast majority of non-working persons with disabilities wanted to work, but they were prevented from working by numerous obstacles. Even as we celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the ADA, these obstacles represent the remaining challenges to be met as we strive to achieve equal employment opportunity for persons with disabilities.

Positive language empowers. People with disabilities are not conditions or diseases; they are individual human beings. For example, an individual is not “an epileptic”, but rather “a person who has epilepsy.” First and foremost, they are people: only secondarily do they have one or more disabling conditions. Hence, they prefer to be referred to, in print or in the broadcast media, as PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.

Workforce diversity became a major management strategy for many employers in the 1990's because it makes good business sense. A diverse workforce gives companies a competitive advantage by enabling them to better meet the needs of their customers, successfully compete in the global marketplace, and hire from an expanded labor pool.

People with disabilities are the nation's largest minority, and the only one that any person can join at any time. If you do not currently have a disability, you have about a 20% chance of becoming disabled at some point during your work life. People with disabilities cross all racial, gender, educational, socioeconomic, and organizational lines.

Companies that include people with disabilities in their diversity programs increase their competitive advantage. People with disabilities add to the variety of viewpoints needed to be successful and bring effective solutions to today's business challenges. The American economy is made stronger when all segments of the population are included in the workforce and in the customer base.

**Accommodations Get the Job Done!** Accommodations are developed on an individual basis and in a partnership between the person with the disability and the employer. This teamwork generally results in cost-effective solutions. The elements to consider are (1) the job tasks that must be performed, (2) the functional limitations of the individual, and (3) whether the proposed accommodation(s) will result in undue hardship to the employer. Creative solutions may involve equipment changes, work station modifications, adjustments to work schedules, assistance in accessing the facility, and dozens of other possibilities, depending on the individual's particular limitations and needs.

In this handbook you will find resources for reducing barriers faced by people with disabilities, ways to benefit from the diversity of people with disabilities, how to be disability sensitive by using preferred language and etiquette, and how to accommodate individuals on the job.

## ON-THE-JOB TRAINING



*Would you like to train an employee to meet your needs, and get paid for training time?*

Consider On-The-Job Training. On-the-job training (O.J.T.) is an individualized training program, designed and conducted at the actual work site. The job applicant receives the specific skill training needed to maintain employment in that field.

*How does on-the-job training work?*

- ▲ OJTs are arranged on an individual basis between the job applicant, employer and vocational consultant.
- ▲ The employer agrees to provide adequate training for entry into the job and a salary equivalent to that of similar positions.
- ▲ After successfully completing the designated OJT period, it is anticipated that the trained applicant will remain on the job.
- ▲ The employer receives reimbursement for the training costs.

*What are the benefits of on-the-job training?*

- ▲ Candidates are selected from a pool of pre-screened applicants.
- ▲ OJTs are tailored to meet your needs.
- ▲ OJT arrangements involve minimal paperwork.
- ▲ You receive a financial reimbursement.
- ▲ You have an opportunity to assess an applicant's work potential.
- ▲ No-cost consultation and technical assistance are available.
- ▲ You receive quality workers who benefit from "hands on" training and become valued employees.
- ▲ You may be eligible to receive tax credits.
- ▲ Your training cost for new employees is reduced.

For more information please call your local DVR Business Relations Consultant.

## SERVICES FOR YOUR BUSINESS

These services are available to you at no cost from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in order to assist you in hiring and retaining employees with disabilities.

### *Employment Services*

- ▲ Pre-screened applicants based on your business needs
- ▲ Computerized skill assessment and job match
- ▲ Referral of qualified workers
- ▲ Job-related training of applicants
- ▲ On-The-Job Training program
- ▲ On-site job trainer and support services
- ▲ Follow-up services

### *Personnel Assistance*

- ▲ DVR can assist you in the implementation of the ADA by targeting people with disabilities in:
  - ▲ Recruiting
  - ▲ Affirmative action planning
  - ▲ Workforce diversity consultation
- ▲ Reasonable accommodation support in Employee Assistance and/or advisory programs
- ▲ Assistance with current employees with disabilities



### *Staff Development*

- ▲ Custom designed training programs for management, staff and co-workers:
- ▲ “Windmills”, understanding how our perceptions affect persons with disabilities
- ▲ “Perspectives: AIDS in the Workplace”
- ▲ ADA technical assistance and resources

### *Technical Assistance*

- ▲ Job/task analysis to determine essential Job requirements
- ▲ Job site assessment in Job restructuring/work site adjustment
- ▲ Accessibility/barrier removal
- ▲ Assistive technology: devices and specialized equipment for workplace accommodation

### *Financial Incentives*

- ▲ Reimbursement for the cost of your on-the-job training expenses
- ▲ Business Tax Incentives if you own or operate a business, we may be able to identify tax credit programs available to you.

## TAX CREDITS AND HIRING INCENTIVES

There are three tax incentives available to help employers cover the cost of accommodations for employees with disabilities and to make their places of business accessible for employees and/or customers with disabilities.

### *Small Business Tax Credit: IRS Code Section 44, Disabled Access Credit*

Small businesses may take an annual tax credit for making their businesses accessible to persons with disabilities. Small businesses that in the previous year earned a maximum of \$1 million in revenue or had 30 or fewer full-time employees are eligible. The credit is 50 percent of expenditures over \$250, not to exceed \$10,250, for a maximum benefit of \$5,000. The tax credit does not apply to the costs of new construction, and a building being modified must have been placed in service before November 5, 1990.

### *Architectural/Transportation Tax Deduction: IRS Code Section 190, Barrier Removal*

Businesses may take an annual deduction for expenses incurred to remove physical, structural, and transportation barriers for persons with disabilities at the workplace. All businesses are eligible. Businesses may take a tax deduction of up to \$15,000 a year for expenses incurred to remove barriers for persons with disabilities. Amounts in excess of the \$15,000 maximum annual deduction may be depreciated. The deduction may not be used for expenses incurred for new construction, or for a complete renovation of a facility or public transportation vehicle, or for the normal replacement of depreciable property.

### *Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)*

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) provides a tax credit for employers who hire certain targeted low-income groups, including vocational rehabilitation referrals (persons with disabilities). The WOTC for new hires employed 400 or more hours is 40% of qualified wages for the first year of employment; the credit for new hires employed 120 to 400 hours is 25%. Qualified wages are capped at \$6,000. WOTC can reduce employer federal tax liability by as much as \$2,400 per new hire.

## RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

Recruiting qualified workers with disabilities is frequently described by employers as frustrating and perplexing. However, there are some steps that can be taken to help simplify the process.

If you would like to speak with other businesses that have hired people with disabilities contact the DVR Business Relations Consultant in your area, or read the employer testimonials on our website.

- ▲ First, let it be known you are actively seeking job candidates with disabilities. Be sure to send your vacancy announcements to disability-related organizations and agencies.
- ▲ State on your job announcements your interest in receiving applications from people with disabilities.
- ▲ Traditional recruitment techniques frequently do not work effectively because so many individuals with disabilities acquire their job skills and placement assistance in programs outside traditional job training and placement programs.
- ▲ Employers need to consider internal as well as external sources when seeking applicants with disabilities. Internally there may be potential applicants, including those who have acquired disabilities on or off the job.

## LANGUAGE AND ETIQUETTE

Listed below are some suggestions on how to relate and communicate with and about people with disabilities. We must look beyond the disability and look at the individual's ability and capability - the things that make each of us unique and worthwhile.

### *Words*

Positive language empowers. When writing or speaking about people with disabilities, it is important to put the person first. Group designations such as "the blind", "the deaf" or "the disabled" are inappropriate because they do not reflect the individuality, equality, or dignity of people with disabilities. Following are examples of positive and negative phrases. Note that the positive phrases put the person first.

### *Affirmative Phrases*

- ▲ person with mental retardation
- ▲ person who is blind
- ▲ person who is partially sighted
- ▲ person with a disability
- ▲ person who is deaf
- ▲ person who is hard of hearing
- ▲ person who has multiple sclerosis
- ▲ person with cerebral palsy
- ▲ person with epilepsy
- ▲ person who uses a wheelchair

### *Negative Phrases*

- ▲ retarded
- ▲ mentally defective
- ▲ the disabled
- ▲ handicapped

- ▲ afflicted by, or victim, sufferer of CP
- ▲ confined or restricted to a wheelchair
- ▲ crippled
- ▲ challenged
- ▲ deformed
- ▲ normal person (implies that the person with a disability isn't normal)
- ▲ dumb & mute

## *Actions*

Outlined below are the “Ten Commandments of Etiquette for Communicating with People with Disabilities” to help you in communicating with persons with disabilities.

1. When talking with a person with a disability, speak directly to that person rather than to a companion or sign language interpreter.
2. When introduced to a person with a disability, it is appropriate to offer to shake hands. People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb can usually shake hands. (Shaking hands with the left hand is an acceptable greeting.)
3. When meeting a person who is visually impaired, always identify yourself and others who may be with you. When conversing in a group, remember to identify the person to whom you are speaking.
4. If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen to or ask for instructions.
5. Treat adults as adults. Address people who have disabilities by their first names only when extending the same familiarity to all others. (Never patronize people who use wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder.)
6. Leaning on or hanging on to a person's wheelchair is similar to leaning on hanging on to a person and is generally considered annoying. The chair is part of the personal body space of the person who uses it.
7. Listen attentively when you're talking with a person who has difficulty speaking. Be patient and wait for the person to finish, rather than correcting or speaking for the person. If necessary, ask short questions that require short answers, a nod or shake of the head.

Never pretend to understand if you are having difficulty doing so. Instead, repeat what you have understood and allow the person to respond. The response will clue you in and guide your understanding.

8. When speaking with a person who uses a wheelchair or a person who uses crutches, place yourself at eye level in front of the person to facilitate the conversation.
9. To get the attention of a person who is deaf, tap the person on the shoulder or wave your hand. Look directly at the person and speak clearly, slowly, and expressively to determine if the person can read your lips. Not all people who are deaf can read lips. For those who do lip read, be sensitive to their needs by placing yourself so that you face the light source and keep hands, cigarettes and food away from your mouth when speaking.
10. Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use accepted, common expressions such as "See you later," or "Did you hear about that?" that seems to relate to a person's disability. Don't be afraid to ask questions when you're unsure of what to do.

## RECEPTION ETIQUETTE

Know where accessible restrooms, drinking fountains and telephones are located. If such facilities are not available, be ready to offer alternatives (e.g. the private/employee restroom, a glass of water, your desk phone).

1. Use a normal tone of voice when extending a verbal welcome. Do not raise your voice unless requested.
2. When introduced to a person with a disability, it is appropriate offer to shake hands. People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb can usually shake hands.
  - a. Shaking hands with the left hand is acceptable.
  - b. For those who cannot shake hands, touch the person on the shoulder or arm to welcome and acknowledge their presence.
3. Treat adults in a manner befitting adults:
  - a. Call a person by his or her first name only when extending that familiarity to all others present.
  - b. Never patronize people using wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder.
4. When addressing a person who uses a wheelchair, never lean on the person's wheelchair. The chair is part of the space that belongs to the person who uses it.
5. When talking with a person who has a disability, look at and speak directly to that person, rather than through a companion who may be along.
6. If an interpreter is present, speak to the person who has scheduled the appointment, not to the interpreter. Always maintain eye contact with the applicant, not the interpreter.

7. Offer assistance in a dignified manner with sensitivity and respect. Be prepared to have the offer declined. Do not proceed to assist, if your offer to assist is declined. If the offer is accepted, listen to, or accept instructions.
  - a) Allow a person with a visual impairment to take your arm (at or about the elbow). This will enable you to guide rather than propel or lead the person.
  - b) Offer to hold or carry packages in a welcome manner. EX AMPLE: “May I help you with your packages?”
  - c) When offering to take a coat or umbrella, do not offer to take a cane or crutches unless the individual requests otherwise.



## CONVERSATION ETIQUETTE

1. When talking to a person with a disability, look at and speak directly to that person, rather than through a companion who may be along.
2. Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use accepted common expressions such as "See you later" or "Got to be running along" that seem to relate to the person's disability.
3. To get the attention of a person with a hearing impairment, tap the person on the shoulder or wave your hand. Look directly at the person and speak clearly, naturally and slowly to establish if the person can read lips, not all persons with hearing impairments can lip-read. Those who can will rely on facial expression and other body language to help in understanding. Show consideration by placing yourself facing the light source and keeping your hands, cigarettes, and food away from your mouth when speaking. Keep mustaches well-trimmed. Shouting won't help. Written notes may.
4. When talking with a person in a wheelchair for more than a few minutes, utilize a chair, whenever possible, in order to place yourself at the person's eye level to facilitate conversation
5. When greeting a person with a severe loss of vision, always identify yourself and others who may be with you. Say, for example, "On my right is Penelope Potts." When conversing in a group, give a vocal cue by announcing the name of the person to whom you are speaking. Speak in a normal tone of voice, indicate in advance when you will be moving from one place to another, and let it be known when the conversation is at an end.
6. Listen attentively when you're talking to a person who has a speech impairment. Keep your manner encouraging rather than correcting. Exercise patience rather than attempting to speak for a person with speech difficulty. When necessary ask short questions that require short answers or a nod or shake of the head. Never pretend to understand if you are having difficulty doing so. Repeat what you understand, or incorporate interviewer's statements into each of the following questions. The person's reactions will clue you in and guide you to understanding.

If you have difficulty communicating, be willing to repeat or rephrase a question. Open ended questions are more appropriate than closed ended questions.

EXAMPLE:

**Closed Ended Question:** You were a tax accountant at XYZ Company in the Corporate Planning Department for seven years. What did you do there?

**Open Ended Question:** Tell me about your recent position as a tax accountant.

7. Do not shout at a hearing impaired person. Shouting distorts sounds accepted through hearing aids and inhibits lip reading. Do not shout at a person who is blind or visually impaired—he/she can hear you!
8. In order to facilitate conversation, be prepared to offer a visual cue to a hearing impaired person or audible cue to a vision impaired person, especially when more than one person is speaking.

## INTERVIEWING SCHEDULING ETIQUETTE



Some interviewees with visual or mobility impairments will phone in prior to the appointment date, specifically for travel information. The scheduler should be very familiar with the travel path in order to provide interviewees with detailed directions.

1. Make sure the place where you plan to conduct the interview is accessible by checking the following:
  - a) Are there handicap parking spaces available and nearby?
  - b) Is there a ramp or step-free entrance?
  - c) Are there accessible restrooms?
  - d) If the interview is not on the first floor, does the building have an elevator?
  - e) Are there any water fountains and telephones at the proper height for a person in a wheelchair to use?
  - f) If an interview site is inaccessible (e.g. steps without a ramp, or a building without an elevator), inform the person about the barrier prior to the interview, and offer to make arrangements for an alternative interview site.
2. When scheduling interviews for persons with disabilities consider their needs ahead of time.
  - a) When giving directions to a person in a wheelchair, consider distance, weather conditions, and physical obstacles such as stairs, curbs, and steep hills.
  - b) Use specifics such as “left a hundred feet” or “right two yards” when directing a person with a visual impairment.
  - c) Be considerate of the additional travel time that may be required by a person with a disability.
4. Familiarize the interviewee in advance with the names of all persons he/she will be meeting during his/her visit. This courtesy allows persons with disabilities to be aware of the names/faces he/she will be meeting.

5. People with disabilities utilize a variety of transportation services when traveling to and from work. When scheduling an interview, be aware that the person may be required to make a reservation 24 hours in advance, plus travel time. Provide the interviewee with an estimated time to schedule their return trip when arranging the interview appointment.

Expect the same measure of punctuality and performance from people with disabilities that is required by every potential or actual employee.

People with disabilities expect equal treatment, not special treatment.

## INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUE ETIQUETTE



1. Conduct interviews in a manner that emphasizes abilities, achievements and individual qualities.
2. Conduct your interview as you would with anyone. Be considerate without being patronizing.
3. When interviewing a person with a speech impediment, stifle any urge to complete a sentence of the interviewee.
4. If it appears that a person's ability inhibits performance of a job ask: How would you perform this job?

### EXAMPLES:

**Inappropriate:** I notice that you are in a wheelchair, and I wonder how you get around. Tell me about your disability.

**Appropriate:** This position requires digging and using a wheelbarrow, as you can see from the job description. Do you foresee any difficulty in performing the required tasks? If so, do you have any suggestions as to how these tasks can be performed?

## INTERVIEWING COURTESIES

Interviewers need to know whether or not the job site is accessible and should be prepared to answer accessibility related questions.

### *Interviewing Persons Using Mobility Aids*

1. Enable people who use crutches, canes or wheelchairs to keep them within reach.
2. Be aware that some wheelchair users may choose to transfer themselves out of their wheelchairs, into an office chair, for the duration of the interview.
3. Here again, when speaking to a person in a wheelchair or on crutches for more than a few minutes, sit in a chair. Place yourself at that person's eye level to facilitate conversation

### *Interviewing Persons with Vision Impairments*

1. When greeting a person with a vision impairment always identify yourself and introduce anyone else who might be present.
2. If the person does not extend their hand (to shake hands), verbally extend a welcome.
3. When offering seating, place the person's hand on the back or arm of the seat. A verbal cue is helpful as well.
4. Let the person know if you move or need to end the conversation.

Allow people who use crutches, canes or wheelchairs to keep them within reach.

### *Interviewing Person with Speech Impairments*

1. Give your whole attention with interest when talking to a person who has a speech impairment.
2. Ask short questions that require short answers or a nod of the head.
3. Do not pretend to understand if you do not. Try rephrasing what you wish to communicate, or ask the person to repeat what you do not understand.
4. Do not raise your voice. Most speech impaired persons can hear and understand.

### *Interviewing Persons who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing*

1. If you need to attract the attention of a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, touch him/her lightly on the shoulder.
2. If the interviewee lip-reads, look directly at him/her. Speak clearly at a normal pace. Do not exaggerate your lip movements or shout. Speak expressively because the person will rely on your facial expressions, gestures and eye contact. (Note: It is estimated that only 4 out of 10 spoken words are visible on the lips.)
3. Place yourself facing the light source and keep your hands, cigarettes and food away from your mouth when speaking.
4. Shouting does not help and can be detrimental. Only raise your voice when requested. Brief, concise written notes may be helpful.
5. In the United States most deaf people use American Sign Language (ASL). ASL is not a universal language. ASL is a language with its own syntax and grammatical structure. When scheduling an interpreter for a non-English speaking person, be certain to retain an interpreter that speaks and interprets in the language of the person.
6. If an interpreter is present, it is commonplace for the interpreter to be seated beside the interviewer, across from the interviewee.
7. Interpreters facilitate communication. They should not be consulted or regarded as a reference for the interview.

## SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING

Sign language interpreters may be used by businesses to facilitate communication between people who are deaf and those who do not sign. Professional interpreters abide by a code of ethics that includes complete confidentiality for all interpreting assignments. Interpreters are used to ensure that accurate and effective communication takes place between the individual who is deaf and the hearing person. Interpreters will sign everything the hearing individual says, and voice everything that the deaf individual signs. Interpreters will not add or leave out any information that is being communicated. Interpreters may ask you to speak slower, or spell out individual words to assist them in communicating accurately.

Sign language interpreters may be required during all phases of the employment process - application, interview, training and during employment. When selecting an interpreter look for professional certification, experience and references. Costs may vary somewhat, however searching for the lowest rate possible may result in selecting unqualified interpreters. It is strongly recommended that the person who is deaf and in need of the interpreter be consulted prior to hiring an interpreter. Because of communication styles, gender or past experiences with specific interpreter the person may have preferences. This will enable the person who is deaf to perform at their best during the application and interview process.

When working with individuals who are deaf and using sign language interpreters remember some of the following tips:

- ▲ Speak to the individual, not the interpreter
- ▲ Treat them as you would any other employee or job applicant
- ▲ Some individuals may also possess lip reading skills. In this case remember to face them when speaking, and avoid covering your mouth
- ▲ Consult with the person who is deaf before hiring an interpreter. They may have a specific interpreter that they would prefer to use

For a list of sign language interpreters or interpreter resources contact the Business Relations Consultant in your area.



## DISABILITY MYTHS AND FACTS

Myths are roadblocks that interfere with the ability of persons with disabilities to have equality in employment. These roadblocks usually result from a lack of experience and interaction with persons with disabilities. This lack of familiarity has nourished negative attitudes concerning employment of persons with disabilities. Listed below are some common myths and the facts that tell the real story.

**MYTH:** Hiring employees with disabilities increases workers compensation insurance rates.

**FACT:** Insurance rates are based solely on the relative hazards of the operation and the organization's accident experience, not on whether workers have disabilities.

**MYTH:** An individual with a psychiatric disability cannot work in a stressful environment where tight timelines have to be met.

**FACT:** All individuals perceive stress differently and their responses vary. Some individuals with psychiatric disabilities perform effectively in jobs that require specific timelines and structure.

**MYTH:** Employees with disabilities have a higher absentee rate than employees without disabilities.

**FACT:** Studies by firms such as DuPont show that employees with disabilities are not absent any more than employees without disabilities.

**MYTH:** Persons with disabilities are inspirational, courageous, and brave for being able to overcome their disability.

**FACT:** Persons with disabilities are simply carrying on normal activities of living when they drive to work, go grocery shopping, pay their bills, or compete in athletic events.

MYTH: Persons with disabilities need to be protected from failing.

FACT: Persons with disabilities have a right to participate in the full range of human experiences including success and failure. Employers should have the same expectations of, and work requirements for, all employees.

MYTH: Persons with disabilities are unable to meet performance standards, thus making them a bad employment risk.

FACT: In 1990, DuPont conducted a survey of 811 employees with disabilities and found 90% rated average or better in job performance compared to 95% for employees without disabilities. A similar 1981 DuPont study which involved 2,745 employees with disabilities found that 92% of employees with disabilities rated average or better in job performance compared to 90% of employees without disabilities. The 1981 study results were comparable to DuPont's 1973 job performance study.

MYTH: Persons with disabilities have problems getting to work.

FACT: Persons with disabilities are capable of supplying their own transportation by choosing to walk, use a car pool, drive, take public transportation, or a cab. Their modes of transportation to work are as varied as those of other employees.

MYTH: Persons who are deaf make ideal employees in noisy work environments.

FACT: Loud noises of a certain vibratory nature can cause further harm to the auditory system. Persons who are deaf should be hired for all jobs that they have the skills and talents to perform. No person with a disability should be prejudged regarding employment opportunities.

MYTH: Considerable expense is necessary to accommodate workers with disabilities.

FACT: Most workers with disabilities require no special accommodations and the cost for those who do is minimal or much lower than many employers believe. Studies by the President's Committee's Job Accommodation Network have shown that 15% of accommodations cost nothing, 51% cost between \$1 and \$500, 12% cost between \$501 and \$1,000, and 22% cost more than \$1,000.

MYTH: Employees with disabilities are more likely to have accidents on the job than employees without disabilities.

FACT: In the 1990 DuPont study, the safety records of both groups were identical.

## SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH DISABILITIES

Serving customers with disabilities provides significant opportunities for the business community. More than 20.3 million families in the U.S. have at least one member with a disability. Persons with disabilities themselves have a combined income of nearly \$700 billion. Of that figure, \$175 billion is discretionary income.

### *Key to Quality Customer Service*

The key to providing quality services to customers with disabilities is to remember that all customers are individuals. Persons with disabilities come in all shapes and sizes with diverse personalities, abilities, interests, needs, and preferences — just like every other customer. Below are some basic tips for interacting with customers who have disabilities. However, in most cases, the best way to learn how to accommodate customers with disabilities is to ask them directly.

Etiquette considered appropriate when interacting with customers with disabilities is based primarily on respect and courtesy. Listen and learn from what the customer tells you regarding his or her needs. Remember, customers with disabilities will continue to patronize businesses that welcome them, are helpful, are accessible and provide quality products and/or services at competitive market prices.

### *Serving Customers who are Blind or Partially Sighted*

- ▲ Speak to the customer when you approach her or him.
- ▲ State clearly who you are; speak in a normal tone of voice.
- ▲ Never touch or distract a service dog without first asking the owner.
- ▲ Tell the customer when you are leaving; never leave a person who is blind talking to an empty space.
- ▲ Do not attempt to lead the customer without first asking; allow the customer to hold your arm and control her or his own movements.
- ▲ Be descriptive when giving directions; give the customer verbal information that is visually obvious to persons who can see. For example, if you are approaching steps mention how many and the direction.

- ▲ If you are offering a seat, gently place the customer's hand on the back or arm of the chair and let her or him sit down by her or himself.
- ▲ When dealing with money transactions, tell the customer the denominations when you count the money he or she is receiving from you.
- ▲ Make sure the customer has picked up all of her or his possessions, before leaving.
- ▲ Ask if the customer needs assistance signing forms. Offer to guide her or his hand to the appropriate space for signature.
- ▲ Offer assistance if the customer appears to be having difficulty locating a specific service area.

### *Serving Customers who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing*

- ▲ Gain her or his attention before starting a conversation (i.e., tap the person gently on the shoulder or arm).
- ▲ Identify who you are (i.e., show them your name badge).
- ▲ Look directly at the customer, face the light, speak clearly, in a normal tone of voice, and keep your hands away from your face; use short, simple sentences.
- ▲ Ask the customer if it would be helpful to communicate by writing or by using a computer terminal.
- ▲ If the customer uses a sign-language interpreter, speak directly to the customer, not the interpreter.
- ▲ If you telephone a customer who is hard of hearing, let the phone ring longer than usual; speak clearly and be prepared to repeat the reason for the call and who you are.
- ▲ If you telephone a customer who is deaf, use your state telecommunications relay service: 1-800-833-6384. Consideration should also be given to purchasing a TTY, a device that allows people who are deaf to communicate over the telephone.
- ▲ Discuss matters that are personal (e.g., financial matters) in a private room to avoid staring or eavesdropping by other customers.

### *Serving Customers with Mobility Restrictions*

- ▲ Put yourself at the wheelchair user's eye level. If possible, sit next to the customer when having a conversation.
- ▲ Do not lean on a wheelchair or any other assistive device.
- ▲ Do not assume the customer wants to be pushed — ask first.
- ▲ Provide a clipboard as a writing surface if counters or reception desks are too high; come around to the customer side of the desk/counter during your interaction.
- ▲ Offer assistance if the customer appears to be having difficulty opening the doors.
- ▲ Make sure there is a clear path of travel.
- ▲ If a person uses crutches, a walker, or some other assistive equipment, offer assistance with coats, bags, or other belongings.
- ▲ Offer a chair if the customer will be standing for a long period of time.
- ▲ If you telephone the customer, allow the phone to ring longer than usual to allow extra time for her or him to reach the telephone.

### *Serving Customers with Speech Impediments*

- ▲ If you do not understand something do not pretend that you do; ask the customer to repeat what he or she said and then repeat it back.
- ▲ Be patient; take as much time as necessary.
- ▲ Try to ask questions which require only short answers, or a nod of the head.
- ▲ Concentrate on what the customer is saying; concentrate on listening and communicating.
- ▲ Avoid barriers like glass partitions and distractions, such as noisy, public places.
- ▲ Do not speak for the customer or attempt to finish her or his sentences.
- ▲ If you are having difficulty understanding the customer, consider writing as an alternative means of communicating, but first ask the customer if this is acceptable.
- ▲ If no solution to the communication problem can be worked out between you and the customer, ask if there is someone who could interpret on the customer's behalf.

- ▲ Discuss matters that are personal (e.g., financial matters) in a private room to avoid staring or eavesdropping by other customers.

### *Serving Customers with Cognitive Disabilities*

- ▲ Be prepared to provide an explanation more than once.
- ▲ Offer assistance with and/or extra time for completion of forms, understanding written instructions, writing checks, and/or decision-making; wait for the customer to accept the offer of assistance; do not “over-assist” or be patronizing.
- ▲ If a customer has difficulty reading or writing, she or he may prefer to take forms home to complete.
- ▲ Be patient, flexible, and supportive; take time to understand the customer and make sure the customer understands you.
- ▲ Consider moving to a quiet or private location, if in a public area with many distractions.

### *Remember...*

- ▲ Provide access to facilities and services.
- ▲ Relax.
- ▲ Listen to the customer.
- ▲ Maintain eye contact without staring.
- ▲ Make the customer feel comfortable.
- ▲ Treat the customer with dignity, respect, and courtesy.
- ▲ Offer assistance but do not insist.
- ▲ Ask the customer to tell you the best way to help.
- ▲ Deal with unfamiliar situations in a calm, professional manner.

## AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) gives people with disabilities civil rights protection that are like those provided to individuals on the basis of race, sex, national origin, and religion. It guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in employment, public accommodations, transportation, state and local government services and telecommunications.

DVR has Business Relations Consultants in your area to assist you with evaluating accessibility and implementing reasonable accommodation.

### *Title I: Employment*

- ▲ Employers with 15 or more employees (four in the City of Seattle) may not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities.
- ▲ Employers must reasonably accommodate the disabilities of qualified applicants or employees, unless an undue hardship would result.
- ▲ Employers may reject applicants or fire employees who pose a direct threat to the health or safety of other individuals in the workplace.
- ▲ Applicants and employees are not protected from personnel actions based on their current illegal use of drugs. Drug testing is not affected.
- ▲ Employers may not discriminate against a qualified applicant or employee because of the known disability of an individual with whom the applicant or employee is known to have a relationship or association.

### *Title II: State and Local Government Operations*

State and local governments may not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities. All government facilities, services, and communications must be accessible consistent with the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

### *Title III: Public Accommodations*

- ▲ Public accommodations such as restaurants, hotels, theaters, doctors' offices, pharmacies, retail stores, museums, libraries, parks, private schools, and day care centers may not discriminate on the basis of disabilities.



- ▲ Reasonable changes in policies, practices, and procedures must be made to avoid discrimination.
- ▲ Auxiliary aids and services must be provided to individuals with vision or hearing impairments or other individuals with disabilities so that they can have an equal opportunity to participate or benefit, unless an undue burden would result.
- ▲ Physical barriers in existing facilities must be removed if removal is readily achievable (i.e. easily accomplishable and able to be carried out without much difficulty or expense.) If not, alternative methods of providing the services must be offered, if those methods are readily achievable.

All new construction in public accommodations as well as in “commercial facilities” such as office buildings, must be accessible. If such facilities are located in multi-story buildings, accessible elevators are generally required to serve all floors. Exemptions may be granted under certain conditions outlined in ADA Access Design Standards.

- ▲ Alterations must be accessible. When alterations to primary function areas are made, an accessible path of travel to the altered area (and the bathrooms, telephones, and drinking fountains serving that area) must be provided to the extent that added accessibility costs are not disproportionate to the overall cost of the alterations. Elevators are required as described above.
- ▲ Entities such as hotels that also offer transportation generally must provide equivalent transportation service to individuals with disabilities. New fixed route vehicles ordered on or after August 26, 1990, and capable of carrying more than 16 passengers, must be accessible.
- ▲ Public accommodations may not discriminate against an individual or entity because of the known disability of an individual with whom the individual or entity is known to have a relationship or association.

#### *Title IV: Telecommunications Relay Services*

Companies offering telephone service to the general public must offer telephone relay services to individuals who use teletypewriters (TTYs) or similar devices.

## REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

Reasonable accommodations enhance the opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities who may not otherwise be considered for reasons unrelated to actual job requirements to be/remain employed. The purpose of providing reasonable accommodations is to enable employers to hire or retain qualified job candidates regardless of their disability, by eliminating barriers in the work place.

According to the Department of Justice Government-Wide Regulations, Section 41.53 entitled REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION, “A recipient shall make reasonable accommodation to the known physical or mental limitations of an otherwise qualified handicapped applicant or employee unless the recipient can demonstrate that the accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the operation of its program.”

Inquiries made of an individual about limitations in job performance must be directly related to the prospective or existing position. Accommodations are tailored for a certain job or situation that an individual is hired to perform. The law requires that each person with a disability must be consulted prior to the planning and be involved in the implementation of an accommodation.

Types of accommodations include assistive devices, reassignment, modified work schedules, job modifications, relocation, or a change in the physical plant. Examples of assistive devices often used in the work place include: Teletypewriters (TTYs), telephone amplifiers for persons with hearing impairments, wooden blocks to elevate desks and tables for wheelchair users, and large-type computer terminals and Braille printers to assist persons with vision impairments.

Decisions to implement an accommodation should include making a choice that will best meet the needs of the individual by minimizing limitation and enhancing his/her ability to perform job tasks, while serving the interests of your majority work force.

## JOB RESTRUCTURING



Matching people with jobs can sometimes be described as placing a square peg in a round hole. This is also true for some individuals with disabilities. As an employer looking to retain qualified workers, identifying an individual's abilities and strengths and then matching those to the job duties can be more successful than the traditional approach to hiring.

Job restructuring involves an analysis of the tasks of the job to identify functions that are performed but are not essential, and do not match the individual's abilities. Such duties can be characterized as marginal functions. In hiring or supervising employees with disabilities, it may be necessary to reassign or trade marginal functions among employees within a given work site.

It can also be a creative HR practice to hire employees with disabilities. This would be done so that one employee would receive the marginal functions that an employee with a disability was not able to perform. In turn, the employee with a disability would normally receive marginal functions, which they could perform. It is important to note that it is not the intent of such restructuring effort to relieve an employee with a disability of his/her workload or to assign undesirable tasks based on disability or a lack of disability.

### *Benefits to Employers*

- ▲ Provides additional options for creative recruiting
- ▲ Access to a broader pool of qualified applicants
- ▲ Makes better use of individual employees' skills and talents
- ▲ No-cost professional consultants to assist in job restructuring

## SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT



Supported employment facilitates competitive work in integrated work settings for individuals with the most severe disabilities (i.e. psychiatric, mental retardation, learning disabilities, traumatic brain injury) for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred, and who, because of the nature and severity of their disability, need ongoing support services in order to perform their job. Supported employment provides assistance such as job coaches, transportation, assistive technology, specialized job training, and individually tailored supervision.

Supported employment is a way to move people from dependence on a service delivery system to independence via competitive employment. Recent studies indicate that the provision of on-going support services for people with severe disabilities significantly increases their rates for employment retention. Supported employment encourages people to work within their communities and encourages work, social interaction, and integration.

### *Benefits to Employers*

- ▲ No fee to employer
- ▲ Thoroughly screened applicants
- ▲ Employees' abilities matched to job requirements
- ▲ On-site job training by professionals
- ▲ Additional training, as necessary
- ▲ Follow-up services for the duration of employment

## DISABILITY AWARENESS TRAINING

“TILTING AT WINDMILLS” . . . a training program designed to help us understand how we influence employment opportunities for people with disabilities because of our own misinformation and lack of knowledge.

### *What is Windmills?*

It's a program that:

- ▲ helps people examine their own perceptions of persons with disabilities;
- ▲ provides an opportunity to question and discuss stereotypes and myths in a non-threatening environment;
- ▲ is individually tailored to meet your company's needs; and
- ▲ is based on everyday work situations.

### *Who is Windmills for?*

Anyone who has a role in hiring or supervising employees or who has an on-going work relationship with persons who are disabled.

- ▲ Supervisors
- ▲ Managers

- ▲ Human Resource Professionals
- ▲ Personnel Representatives
- ▲ Employee Assistance Personnel
- ▲ Affirmative Action Officers
- ▲ Co-Workers

### *How will Windmills benefit you?*

It will:

- ▲ Assist you in hiring qualified applicants;
- ▲ provide tips on interviewing;
- ▲ increase your understanding of stereo-types that may affect the hiring process;
- ▲ inform you about simple, inexpensive accommodations which enable a person who is disabled to perform effectively, and;
- ▲ help you understand workers who have become disabled.

### *Scheduling Information:*

**Time Needed:** 1-1/2 hour – 1/2 day or can be incorporated into your existing training programs.

**Cost:** Offered as complimentary service by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

**Location:** Conducted at your work site in a small group setting

**Follow Up:** Follow up service and consultation available to your company upon request

**Contact:** For more information please contact a **Business Relations Consultant in your area.**

## INTERNET RESOURCES



*The Washington State, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR):*  
*<http://www.wa.gov/dshs/dvr>*

A statewide employment resource for people with disabilities and businesses. Business services are customized and generally available at no-cost.

*Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Technical Assistance Program:*  
*<http://www.ada-infonet.org>*

The ADA Technical Assistance Program is a federally funded network of grantees, which provide information, training and technical assistance to businesses.

*Job Accommodation Network (JAN): <http://janweb.icdi.wvu.edu>*

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is not a job placement service, but an international toll-free consulting service that provides information about job accommodations and the employability of people with disabilities. JAN also provides information regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

*Washington Assistive Technology Alliance (WATA): <http://www.wata.org>*

Assistive Technology information, referral, consultation, and training. on the selection of AT devices, services and funding.

*Washington State Business Leadership Network*  
*<http://www.wsbln.org>*

The WSBLN is a network of employers who educate and support businesses to hire, retain and improve customer service toward people with disabilities.

*Washington State Department of Services for the Blind*  
*<http://www.wa.gov/dsb/>*

The Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) provides a variety of programs to blind and visually impaired persons of all ages. Services are also available to assist businesses in hiring and accommodating blind employees

*UW DO-IT Program: Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology*

*<http://www.washington.edu/doit>*

Programs to promote the use of technology to maximize the independence, productivity and participation of people with disabilities.

*Washington WorkSource*

*<http://www.go2worksource.com>*

WorkSource is a joint venture of organizations dedicated to addressing Washington State's employment needs.

*President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities*  
*: <http://www.pcepd.gov>*

Educational kits, resources and facts about employing people with disabilities.

*ACCESS (Allying Companies, Communities and Employees with Skills for Success): <http://www.accessnw.org>*

An annual job and technology expo held during October, National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Provides employers with access to qualified, motivated job candidates with disabilities, and job seekers with a barrier-free environment for meeting a variety of employers.



The World Wide Web has rapidly become the most popular Internet resource, combining hypertext and multimedia to provide a huge network of educational, governmental and commercial resources. Yet because of the multimedia nature of the medium, many Internet surfers cannot access some of these materials. Some visitors:

- ▲ cannot see graphics because of visual impairments.
- ▲ cannot hear audio because of hearing impairments.
- ▲ use slow connections and modems or older equipment which cannot download large files.
- ▲ have difficulty navigating sites that are poorly organized with unclear directions because they have learning disabilities, speak English as a second language, or are younger than the average user.
- ▲ use adaptive technology with their computer to access the Web.

Following universal design principles ensures that all Internet users can get to the information at your Web site regardless of their disability or the limitations of their equipment and software. Use the following guidelines when developing and revising your Web pages to ensure that they are accessible to a diverse audience!

- ▲ Maintain a simple, consistent page layout throughout your site.
- ▲ Keep backgrounds simple. Make sure there is enough contrast.
- ▲ Use standard HTML.

- ▲ Design large buttons.
- ▲ Include a note about accessibility.
- ▲ Include short, descriptive ALT attributes for all graphical features on your page.
- ▲ Include descriptive captions for pictures and transcriptions of manuscript images.
- ▲ Caption video and transcribe other audio.
- ▲ Make links descriptive so that they are understood out of context.
- ▲ Use tables and frames sparingly and consider alternatives.
- ▲ Always test forms and databases with a text-based browser. Include an e-mail address and other contact information for those who cannot use your forms or database.
- ▲ Test your Web page with as many Web browsers as you can, and always test your Web page with at least one text-based browser.
- ▲ Bobby, created at CAST (Center for Applied Special Technology), is an HTML validator program designed to test accessibility in addition to highlighting non-standard and incorrect HTML.

DO-IT (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking and Technology) at the University of Washington includes a listing of Internet resources for accessible Web design, as well as other information. An 11 minute video that introduces accessible Web design, World Wide Access, may be ordered through DO-IT.

## ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY (AT)

Assistive Technology (AT) includes both devices and services. A device is any item or piece of equipment used to maintain or improve the functional capabilities of a person with a disability. Many high-tech and low-tech devices are now available to assist people with disabilities with daily living tasks, communication, education, work, and recreation. Examples are: wheelchairs, Velcro, adapted clothing and toys, computers, seating systems, powered mobility, augmentative communication devices, special switches, assisted listening devices, visual aids, memory prosthetics, and thousands of other commercially available or adapted items. AT services support people with disabilities or their caregivers to help them select, acquire, or use AT devices. Such services also include functional evaluations, training on or demonstration of devices, and purchasing or leasing devices.

Many jobs can be accommodated through the use of Assistive Technology to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions of a job. There are resources available to business to assist in the process of identifying appropriate types of Assistive Technology, and identifying funding options. In many cases the cost of the accommodation will be the responsibility of the employer, however in some instances additional resources may be available.

Most workers with disabilities require no special accommodations and the cost for those who do is minimal or much lower than many employers believe. Studies by the President's Committee's Job Accommodation Network have shown that 15% of accommodations cost nothing, 51% cost between \$1 and \$500, 12% cost between \$501 and \$1,000, and 22% cost more than \$1,000.

For more information on Assistive Technology contact the Business Relations Consultant in your area.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ's)

If your question isn't answered or you would like additional information, please contact the **Business Relations Consultant** in your area.

Q: Where can I recruit qualified individuals with disabilities?

A: DVR can assist you with all of your recruitment needs at no cost to you. Search our database of job seekers. You can also list your job opening by contacting the DVR office nearest you, or by working directly with a Business Relations Consultant.

Q: Does DVR offer training on hiring persons with disabilities?

A: "Windmills" a disability sensitivity and awareness training can be custom designed for your business. It is offered at no cost to you, and can be custom designed to meet your needs.

Q: Are there other businesses in my area with which I can network concerning disability issues?

A: See our webs site employer testimonials Your local Business Relations Consultant can also provide you with information about local conferences and networking opportunities.

Q: Are there any resources that provide financial assistance when I hire a person with a disability?

A: DVR can provide On-The-Job Training funding for eligible job seekers needing to learn skills once employed. There are also tax credits that may apply in some situations.

Q: Is DVR the same as Labor and Industries (L&I)?

A: No. The Washington State Department of Labor and Industries serves specifically injured workers, while DVR serves anyone with disability experiencing barriers to employment. In some cases DVR will work in cooperation with L&I.

Q: If I hire a person from DVR and it doesn't work out, then what?

A: We want to ensure that every job match is a good one. We try our best to make sure that the person we send to you is a good fit. If it seems there are problems we will work with you to make sure that the situation works well for both you and the employee.

Q: What if I need information regarding accommodations for an employee with disabilities? Who can I call?

A: Many times these accommodations can be accomplished with very little effort and expense. Sometimes no accommodations are necessary. The best resource is to ask the employee with a disability. The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is an excellent resource for accommodations. For technical assistance contact a DVR Business Relations Consultant.

Q: Can DVR advise me on complying with the ADA?

A: Yes. Guidance on the ADA, disability awareness, job accommodations and accessibility can be provided to you at no cost by our Business Relations Consultants.

Q: Who can assist me with writing a job description that is in compliance with ADA recommendations and identifying the essential job requirements?

A: DVR can provide technical assistance to your human resources staff at no cost to you. Contact the Business Relations Consultant in your area.

Q: I am holding a business function for my employees. Where can I find qualified sign language interpreters for employees who are deaf?

A: There are many local resources for sign language interpreters. It is important that you hire qualified interpreters to ensure good communication. Our staff can provide you with up-to-date lists of qualified sign language interpreters in your area.





To request this publication in alternate format, please contact a Customer Service Representative at the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. They can be reached at 1-800-637-5627. This publication may also be available on our website. The address is:

<http://www.wa.gov/dshs/dvr>

No person, because of race, color, national origin, creed, religion, sex, age, or disability, shall be discriminated against in employment, services or any aspect of the programs' activities.

**DVR**

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

